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THE EARLY SENTIMENT FOR THE ANNEXATION OF CALIFORNIA: AN ACCOUNT OF THE GROWTH OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN CALI- FORNIA, 1835-1846

I

ROBERT GLASS CLELAND

FOREWORD

For a decade prior to the Mexican War, a well-defined movement for the annexation of California was developing in the United States. Various writers have given some attention to isolated incidents properly belonging to this movement, but hitherto no one has traced its growth in any systematic or connected way. To do this is the aim of the following discussion. In it, after roughly outlining the various ways in which California was first brought to the attention of the American people, I have devoted considerable space to the efforts made by Jackson, Tyler, and Polk to purchase the province from Mexico; to popular interest throughout the United States in its acquisition; and to the growth of emigration from the western states. I have considered it worth while, also, to show the effect of current rumors that one or more European nations were seeking to secure a foothold in the province; and to add a chapter on the influence of slavery upon the American program. To local affairs

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in California, I have given only so much attention as seemed necessary for a clear understanding of their relation to the movement for annexation.

Inevitably, in the treatment of a subject involving so many details, mistakes have arisen and faults can readily be pointed out. Yet I believe the account to be accurate in the main, and trust that it will shed some new light on a most interesting and important phase of westward expansion. Wherever possible I have gotten my material from manuscript sources, finding the official documents on file in the State Department; the Polk, Jackson, and Van Buren correspondence in the Library of Congress; and the Larkin correspondence in the Bancroft Collection of the University of California especially rich in this regard. Frequent use has also been made of contemporary writings of the time, whether in book, magazine, or newspaper form. These have been indicated by references throughout the text, as have also the considerable number of secondary authorities and government publications upon which I have been privileged to draw.

It would be but a poor return on my part if I made no mention of the assistance I have received in the preparation of this work. To the Chief Clerk of the State Department; to Mr. Gaillard Hunt, Chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress; and to the authorities of the State University of California for permission to use the material of the Bancroft Collection, I am especially grateful. Two men, however, more than any others deserve my warmest thanks. These are Professor Herbert E. Bolton of the University of California, upon whose kindly interest and help I have never counted in vain; and Professor Robert M. McElroy, under whose direction this study was undertaken and whose friendship has been a constant source of inspiration.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES
AND CALIFORNIA, AND THE FIRST NEGOTIATIONS FOR
THE PURCHASE OF THE PROVINCE

The fur trade.—The interest of the United States in California began toward the close of the eighteenth century. It was at first due almost entirely to economic causes; and, like many commercial activities of the day, centered chiefly in New England. In 1787, shortly after the opening of the Chinese-American trade by William Shaw, Robert Gray and John Kendrick, commanding the *Lady Washington* and the *Columbia*, sailed for the northwest coast of the Pacific, partly on a voyage of exploration and partly for the discovery of new fields for commercial enterprises.¹

This venture though of primary interest in the history of the region around the Columbia, was also of great importance from the standpoint of California. In the first place it so aroused the jealousy of the Spanish government that the authorities of Mexico instructed those of California to seize "a ship named *Columbia* which they say belongs to General Washington of the American States," should it arrive at San Francisco.² In the second place, it was by this voyage that Gray, having found a ready market at Canton³ for a few hundred sea otter skins procured from the Indians, opened up a profitable fur trade with China⁴ in which New England merchants were eager to participate.

The arrival of one of these American fur-trading vessels at Monterey on October 29, 1795, marks the beginning of a commercial intercourse between New England and California, that, assuming various forms, continued for half a century and did

¹Robert Greenhow, *History of Oregon and California* (Boston. Little and Brown. 1844), 179-181.

²Pedro Fages to Josef Argüello, May 13, 1789, in Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Works* (San Francisco. A. L. Bancroft & Co. 1882-90), XVIII, 445. See also Greenhow, 184-185.

³China was then the world's greatest fur market. For the relation of the Cantonese fur trade to the settlement of Astoria, see the letter of Astor to Adams, Jan. 4, 1823, in Greenhow, 439.

⁴Gray valued 100 skins at \$4,875, exclusive of freight. Gray and Ingraham to Don Juan Francisco, Aug. 3, 1792, in Greenhow, 417.

much in an indirect way to bring about the acquisition of the latter province by the United States.

In accordance with Spain's general colonial policy, the inhabitants of California were forbidden to trade or have any dealings with foreigners. But Spain lay many leagues away, and while some officials conscientiously tried to enforce the royal commands, they found the prevention of the illicit trade, for which both Americans and Californians were eager, quite impossible.⁵ On the contrary, within a few years it had grown to a very considerable size, especially as from 1796 to 1814 the direct trade with China from the North Pacific Coast lay almost wholly in American hands.⁶

Much of this early fur trade, it is true, was carried on north of the California line, but the most valuable furs—those of the sea otter—were found in greatest abundance along the California coast from San Diego northward. These were sometimes obtained, as already indicated, by illicit purchase or barter from the Californians, of whom the mission authorities were the most dependable sources of supply. More often, however, they were poached along the great stretches of unfrequented shore, or from the neighboring channel islands, and at times, indeed, from the waters of the principal harbors, to the great, but helpless indignation of the Spanish authorities, who had neither skiff nor scow in which to pursue the intruders.⁷ The skins thus obtained were carried to Canton and there exchanged for tea, lacquered ware, silks, and the various other commodities of the Chinese markets. These in turn were brought back either to the Russian settlements of Alaska or to California, where they found ready disposal; or quite as frequently they were transported direct to Europe or the United States.⁸

⁵An American navigator, writing in 1808, said that for several years trading vessels of the United States had left as much as \$25,000 in specie annually among the Californians and that the government was powerless to prevent this intercourse (Robert Shaler, in *American Register*, III, 147 *et seq.*). Money, it should be remarked, was never plentiful among the Californians, and such a sum as Shaler mentioned was of material benefit to the financial interests of the country.

⁶Greenhow, 266, quoting from *London Quarterly Review*, October, 1816.

⁷Bancroft, XIX, 63-64.

⁸For a general discussion of the Boston-California-China trade, see William Heath Davis, *Sixty Years in California* (San Francisco. A. J. Leary. 1889), 295-6. Davis came to California in 1816.

In 1803 Thomas O'Cain made a contract with the Russian Baranof to

The whale fisheries.—In speaking of these early commercial enterprises, it is also necessary to mention New England's interest in the whale industry, which, like the northwest trade, gave her also a first hand knowledge of California. Edmund Burke's tribute to the men of Nantucket and New Bedford was not misplaced;⁹ and while the Revolutionary War put a temporary stop to their voyages, no sooner was peace declared than they were again "vexing strange seas" with their fisheries.

Shortly after 1800, these vessels, oily, ill-smelling, and often sadly in need of repairs, began to touch at the California ports for fresh supplies before beginning the long homeward voyage around the Horn. As the North Pacific came to furnish a more and more valuable hunting ground,¹⁰ these visits increased in frequency and soon a regular trade was established with the inhabitants of Monterey and San Francisco. This was largely a system of barter, by which, in exchange for some four or five hundred dollars worth of New England manufactured goods, carried for the purpose, a returning whaler could secure sufficient fresh provisions for its journey home.

Hide and tallow trade.—A third form of commercial intercourse between California and the United States, more direct than the other two, was begun in 1822, after Mexico had achieved her independence.¹¹ In that year, owing chiefly to the representations of William A. Gale, a former fur trader on the northwest coast, the Boston firm of Bryant and Sturgis, with several business companions, were induced to fit out a vessel to open up a new line of trade with the Pacific, exchanging New England's abundant

hunt otter in California on shares. The Russians were to supply the Indian hunters, and the Americans agreed to transport the skins and furnish the Alaskan settlements with supplies. The venture was so profitable that other contracts of a similar nature were entered into, the agreements lasting until 1815. The Winships were prominent in these dealings. Bancroft, XIX, 63 *et seq.* For an effort of the Russian Government to secure the official sanction of the United States to this arrangement, see Greenhow, 275.

⁹*The Works of Edmund Burke* (Boston. Little and Brown. 1839), II, 30.

¹⁰From 1816 to 1822 the industry brought in more than \$6,000,000 to Nantucket and New Bedford alone, and employed 129 vessels. Many urged the occupancy of Oregon to supply these American vessels with a port for refitting and provisioning. *Annals of Congress*, XL, 414 *et seq.*

¹¹Bancroft, XIX, 475.

stock of manufactures for the hides and tallow of the California cattle. From this time on, the "Boston ships," as they were called, plied regularly up and down the California coast, disposing of their cargoes in all harbors from San Diego to San Francisco, and receiving hides and tallow in return.¹²

The Russian advance.—By the end of the first quarter of the century a loose connection had thus been established with California through these various mediums of trade. In addition to this, the progress of the Russians down the coast from their settlements in Alaska had begun to attract the attention of the United States, even in an official way. As early as 1808, a warning was issued against this advance by an article in the *American Register*.¹³ The author, Captain Robert Shaler, having been engaged in the Chinese trade some years before, had acquired an intimate knowledge of the conditions in California and of the undeveloped possibilities of the country. After describing these, he went on to point out the feebleness of the government and the ease with which it would become a prey to the attack of any hostile force, dwelling especially upon the unfortified state of the harbors. San Francisco, whose advantages were strikingly portrayed, was guarded by a battery which made only a "show of defence." At Monterey conditions were no better. Santa Barbara "would fall an easy conquest to the smallest ship of war." San Diego, with all its natural facilities, had only a "sorry" defence; while the harbors of Lower California were in an equally forlorn condition. But not only had the Spaniards failed to provide against the encroachments of their northern neighbors; they had rather, according to Shaler, made such encroachment easier by their very attempts at defensive measures, having taken "every obstacle out of the way of an invading enemy," by stocking the province with cattle and colonizing it with a discontented lot

¹²It should be noted that this commercial intercourse brought a number of Americans to the province as permanent residents. Many of these took out naturalization papers, became large land holders, and married wives from prominent California families. Some were of a less desirable character—deserters and broken-down sailors from the whaling and trading ships. Bancroft, XIX-XX, Appendix, *Pioneer Register and Index*.

¹³*American Register*, III, 136-175. The article is entitled "*Journal of a voyage between China and the northwestern coast of America made in 1804*." The part dealing with California is on pages 147-161. See also Bancroft, XIX, 23-24, note.

who would welcome the security and kindly treatment of a foreign government.¹⁴

Exactly how far Shaler aimed to excite an apprehension of Russia's dealings in the Pacific, and how far he desired to emphasize the desirability of California as an object for American annexation, does not appear. Probably, however, when he wrote, "The conquest of this country would be absolutely nothing; it would fall without an effort to the most inconsiderable force," he had both purposes in mind, and thus made himself the pioneer of a not inconsiderable body of later writers who advocated annexation to forestall foreign interference.

However this may be, Shaler's warning against the Russians was well founded.¹⁵ The hunters of the Russian-American company had long been coming to California in search of furs; and in 1812 Baranof, the "Little Czar," succeeded in establishing a colony, to which he gave the name of Ross, not far from Bodega Bay, and some thirty miles north of San Francisco. The object of this settlement, in its commercial aspect, was not merely to secure a larger interest in the California fur trade, but to supply the parent colony of Russians at New Archangel, or Sitka, with grain and other food-stuffs which could not be produced in the bleaker north. In addition, Baranof had the more important purpose of ultimately extending the Czar's control over a large part of Upper California by means of this colony, and especially of seizing the Bay of San Francisco.¹⁶

Against this encroachment the Spanish officials protested from time to time at the bidding of their superiors, but probably with no great desire of seeing their protests effective, as the trade conducted by the Russians proved of material benefit to the province. And even had it been otherwise, there was no force in California sufficient to expel them.¹⁷ Before many years, how-

¹⁴*American Register*, III, 160-161.

¹⁵California was colonized largely to protect the coast against the Russian advance. This was as early as 1769. Bancroft, XIX, 58.

¹⁶Letter of Rezánof, Feb. 15, 1806, in Bancroft, XIX, 80, note.

¹⁷For the Russian settlements in California, see Bancroft, XIX, 58-82, 294-320; Thomas C. Lancey, *Cruise of the Dale* (Published in San José *Pioneer*, 1879(?), and preserved in bound form in the Bancroft Collection), 31 *et seq.*; Agnes C. Laut, *Vikings of the Pacific* (New York, Macmillan, 1905), 292, 338; Franklin H. Tuthill, *History of California* (San Francisco, H. H. Bancroft & Co. 1866), 118-20; Irving B. Rich-

ever, the presence of the Russians in California began to excite comment in the United States and to receive a certain amount of official attention. On November 11, 1818, J. B. Prevost, a special commissioner of the United States government to the Pacific Coast, wrote from "Monte Rey, New California," that the Spanish authority was threatened by the Russian Czar whose colony had already been planted close to San Francisco, a harbor that, ranking among "the most convenient, extensive and safe" ports of the world, was nevertheless "wholly without defense and in the neighborhood of a feeble, diffused and disaffected population."¹⁸

In the following year a rumor spread that Spain had ceded to Russia a strip of territory on the Pacific Coast 800 miles long, in return for assistance furnished in the expeditions against the revolutionists of Lima and Buenos Ayres.¹⁹ In the *St. Louis Enquirer* an unknown writer (perhaps Senator Benton) issued a warning against the "*Progress of the Russian Empire.*" well calculated to arouse the apprehension of those to whom Russia, as a member of the Holy Alliance and a rival in the northwest trade, was already an object of sufficient distrust.

"Looking to the east for everything," said the article, "Americans have failed to notice the advance of the Russians on the Pacific Coast until they have succeeded in pushing their settlements as far south as Bodega. Their policy is merely the extension of the policy of Peter the Great and Catherine. Alexander is occupied with a scheme worthy of his vast ambition. . . . The acquisition of the gulf and peninsula of California and the Spanish claim to North America. . . . We learn this not from diplomatic correspondence, but from American fur traders who learn it from the Russian traders now protected by the Emperor in carrying off our furs!"²⁰ How strong an influence these public

man, *California under Spain and Mexico* (Boston and New York. Houghton, Mifflin Company. 1911), 191-201, *passim*.

¹⁸Prevost to Adams, in *Documents transmitted to the House of Representatives*, Jan. 24, 1823. *American State Papers, Miscellaneous*, II, 1008-9; *Annals of Congress*, XL, 1209-10.

¹⁹News brought to Canton by a Russian frigate. *Cruise of the Dale*, 31; reported also in *Niles' Register*, XVI, 237, May 29, 1819; XVII, 232, Dec. 11, 1819.

²⁰Reprinted in *Niles' Register*, XVI, 361, July 24, 1819.

rumors and Prevost's official report exerted upon the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 has not yet been accurately determined, but it is certain that the Russian colony at Ross lent color to the fear of a much farther advance to the south; and served also as a strong argument for the establishment of American settlements in Oregon.²¹

Beginning of overland immigration.—Thus by degrees the far off Spanish province on the Pacific was brought to the attention of the American people not merely through the agency of commerce, but, in an equally effective way, through the danger to which it was exposed of passing into the hands of a powerful European nation. A third agency, beginning somewhat later than either of those just named, but operating in a similar manner, was the overland communication with California established by hunters and trappers, and the subsequent immigration that naturally followed from the Western states.

Jedediah Smith.—Two of these early journeys deserve special attention. In August, 1826, Jedediah S. Smith, a native of Connecticut,²² who had been for some years associated with Ashley in the fur trade and was at this time a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, left the company's post near the Great Salt Lake and after four months' travel reached San Diego with his band of fifteen men. Here Smith was arrested by the California authorities, who demanded passports, in accordance with the Mexican law, from all strangers. His imprisonment did not last long, however, as he soon found a sponsor for his good behavior in an American sea captain by the name of Cunningham, whose ship, the *Courier*, chanced to be in the harbor.

Upon his release, Smith, in spite of the commands of the San Diego authorities that he leave the province, seems to have wandered pretty much as he pleased through the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, being prevented from crossing the Sierra

²¹Report of the Committee on the Occupation of the Columbia River, Jan. 25, 1821. *Annals of Congress*, XXXVII, 955-6. The report mentioned the military defences of Ross, the dominating position of Russia in Europe and Asia; and called attention to the fact that Spain's territory in North America lay wholly open to the access of Russia and was exposed to her "fearful weight of power."

²²Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York. Harper. 1902), I, 252.

Nevadas by heavy snows and the loss of his animals. Late in May, 1827, however, leaving all but two of his companions, he made the difficult passage of the mountains and reached the Great Salt Lake in a destitute condition.²³ In the fall of that year, Smith was again in California, bringing with him a second company of eighteen men, to the rather indignant surprise of the Californians, who, however, while insisting that he leave the country, did not seriously molest him. After remaining for some time, the American intruders continued their journey northward to Oregon where they were attacked by Indians. Many of the company were killed and all the furs lost, but Smith and those of his companions who escaped, made their way to Vancouver, where they obtained assistance from the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. Two years later this pioneer of California explorers was killed in New Mexico.²⁴

The Pattie expedition.—Two years after Smith's arrest in San Diego, a second party of Americans, eight in number, with Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie as leaders, having been found in Lower California without passports, were brought before the Mexican governor, Echeandia, and thrown into prison on the charge of being spies of old Spain. The two Patties, father and son, were Kentuckians who had gradually pushed farther and farther west until they reached New Mexico and Arizona where for some years they were alternately miners and trappers. In was on one of their trapping expeditions down the Colorado that they attempted to cross the desert to the Spanish settlements on the coast, succeeding only after the most distressing and unprintable hardships.

Their reception by the Californians has been noted; nor were they so fortunate as Smith had been in securing a swift release. On the contrary, their prison experience was bitter in the extreme,

²³Letter of Smith to General Clark published in the *Missouri Republic*, October 11, 1827. Communication from Cunningham announcing Smith's arrival at San Diego, *Ibid.*, Oct. 25, 1827.

²⁴No two authorities agree in the account of Smith's adventures. The following, however, are probably the most reliable: Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, I, 282-7; J. M. Guinn, *Captain Jedediah Smith* (Historical Society of Southern California Publications, III, 1896, 45-53). Bancroft (XX, 152-160) bases his account on fragmentary records in the California archives and on a French translation there of the letter from Smith to General Clark cited above.

if we may judge from the younger Pattie's account. Sylvester Pattie died in his cell unattended by his son, who was forbidden to visit his father, and all the prisoners were treated with great severity. Eventually, however, they were released on condition that Pattie should vaccinate the mission Indians, who were dying in great numbers from an epidemic of smallpox. In fulfillment of this agreement Pattie journeyed as far north as San Francisco, and later reached the Russian settlement of Ross. Finally, quitting California, he returned home by way of Mexico, where he vainly hoped to secure an indemnity,²⁵ and reached Kentucky, a broken and ruined man. The experiences which he underwent, as well as some which he probably did not undergo, were shortly afterwards published under the supervision of Timothy Flint of Cincinnati.²⁶

The bitter and oftentimes extravagant criticism of the Californians by the writer was well calculated to arouse a prejudice against them, but for the country itself he had only praise. "Those who traverse it," he wrote, "if they have any capability of perceiving and admiring the beautiful and sublime in scenery, must be constantly excited to wonder and praise. It is no less remarkable for uniting the advantage of healthfulness, a good soil, temperate climate and yet one of exceeding mildness, a happy mixture of level and elevated ground and vicinity to the sea."²⁷

Results of the Smith and Pattie expeditions.—The arrival of Smith and the two Patties in California marked a new chapter in the relations of that country and the United States. Follow-

²⁵The American chargé d'affaires at Mexico was directed to investigate the arrest of the Pattie Company. He reported that all the prisoners had been freed except Sylvester Pattie, who died in prison; that several of the Americans had remained in California to go into business; and that the younger Pattie was then on his way to the United States. Van Buren to Butler, Jan. 22, 1830; Butler to Van Buren, June 29, 1830. MSS., State Department.

²⁶The title of the book is in itself a comprehensive history of Pattie's entire wanderings. We may be forgiven for writing it simply, James Ohio Pattie, *Personal Narrative* (Edited by Timothy Flint. Cincinnati. 1833). A reprint appears in Reuben G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland. Arthur H. Clark Company. 1905), XVIII. A plagiarized edition under the title "*The long hunters of Kentucky*," by P. Bilson, was published in New York in 1847.

²⁷Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XVIII, 306.

ing them in a surprisingly short time²⁸ came other bands of trappers under such leaders as Young, Jackson, Wolfskill, Walker, and many others whose names are not known and who left no record of their journeys.²⁹ Not infrequently members of these early parties gave up their wanderings and became influential and peaceful citizens, while others were a constant menace to the California authorities. As for the rest, coming and going with the seasons, rough, careless of life, contemptuous of law, they wandered up and down the great inland valleys and rivers of California; or by frequent crossing of the Sierras prepared the way for the subsequent flow of immigration.

"One sees in his pages," says Thwaites in referring to Pattie's narrative,

the beginnings of the drama to be fought out in the Mexican war—the rich and beautiful country which excited the cupidity of the American pioneer; the indolence and effeminacy of the inhabitants which inspired the backwoodsman's contempt; and the vanguard of the American advance, already touching the Rockies and ready to push on to the Pacific. . . . As a part of the vanguard of the American host that was to crowd the Mexican from the fair province of his domain, Pattie's wanderings are typical and suggestive of more than mere adventure.³⁰

Butler's negotiations.—In these three ways, therefore, first, by commercial intercourse, then through fear of the Russian advance, and lastly by the opening up of the overland routes of communication, California gradually became more than a passing name to the people of the United States.³¹ It was not, however, until 1835 that this government, influenced largely by the representa-

²⁸Many of the parties were organized in 1830 and 1831. Bancroft, XX, 384-9.

²⁹The reason for this is obvious—the trade was against the Mexican law; and in addition those engaged in it were not often given to recording their own adventures.

³⁰Preface to *Pattie's Narrative*, 19.

³¹The first of these centered, as has been shown, in New England; the second concerned the whole country; the third was of primary interest to the west. This division held good until the outbreak of the Mexican War. A fourth cause of increased interest in California during this early period was the agitation of the Oregon question by Benton, Linn, and a small, but persistent, coterie of western senators and representatives. Anything attracting attention to any part of the Pacific coast served indirectly to attract attention to California.

tions of commercial interests, made its first attempt to secure the harbor of San Francisco.³²

This early negotiation for the purchase of California was closely interwoven with the contemporaneous negotiation for the acquisition of Texas, forming indeed, simply a minor part of the larger project. Anthony Butler, a man eminently unqualified for any position of trust, was sent to Mexico in 1829 to carry out a scheme for the purchase of Texas which he himself had probably suggested,³³ succeeding Joel R. Poinsett, the American minister who was recalled at the request of the Mexican government. For six years Butler was left free to work his will, so far as he was able, with the Mexican officials, and to discredit both himself and his government.

From the first, Butler's communications to the State Department began to hint at bribery as the best means of accomplishing his purpose, and soon were openly advocating it.³⁴ Early in June,

³²The statement is not infrequently made that the purchase of California was attempted by Clay when Secretary of State under Adams. See, for example, *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 211; speech of Charles J. Ingersoll, Jan. 19, 1847. *Appendix to Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 sess., 128; Bancroft, XIII, 322-323. Whoever may have written this volume of Bancroft could scarcely have known the contents of volume XX, 399-400, of the same series, or of *H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, which he cites as authority. The boundaries for which Poinsett was instructed to negotiate included no territory west of the Colorado south of the 42d parallel. Clay to Poinsett, March 25, 1825. *H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, p. 6; same to same, March 15, 1827, *Ibid.*, 9. See also *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams with portions of his diary from 1795 to 1848*, edited by C. F. Adams (Philadelphia. Lippincott. 1877), XI, 349.

³³The plan, dated August 12, 1829, is in the Van Buren MSS., Library of Congress; see also Jackson to Van Buren, Aug. 12 (*Ibid.*), and Jackson's draft of Aug. 13. According to Reeves, the official instructions, dated Aug. 25, were carried by Butler to Poinsett. Jesse S. Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk* (Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1907), 65-67. For a complete estimate of Butler and his career in Mexico, the reader is referred to George Lockhart Rives, *the United States and Mexico, 1821-1848* (New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1913), I, 235-261. It is perhaps well to add that the present article was in manuscript before Rives's exhaustive work was issued from the press. I have not been able, therefore, to avail myself of its contents as freely as I could have wished.

³⁴Butler has suggested to a Mexican official that the United States is capable of "devising ways and means" of relieving the embarrassment of the treasury (Butler to Jackson, Feb. 23, 1832, Jackson MSS., Library of Congress); Jackson thinks Butler's suggestion "judicious" and one that may "lead to happy results" (Jackson to Butler, April 19, *Ibid.*). Butler believes the use of half a million dollars to put certain personages in the "right humor" will bring speedy conclusion of the treaty (Butler to

1834, he asked to return to the United States on the ground that a personal interview with the President was highly important, and that after it he could return to Mexico to be much more useful to his government.³⁵ Having finally secured Jackson's consent to his request, Butler landed in New York in the early part of June, 1835, with a still more extensive scheme of bribery in his head than any he had so far suggested, and in his pocket a note signed by Hernández, a priest standing close to Santa Anna.

On June 17 the returned Minister addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, John Forsyth, and enclosed the note from the Mexican priest. In this Hernández had promised to bring about a cession of the desired territory provided \$500,000 were placed at his disposal "to be judiciously applied."³⁶ In the accompanying letter Butler assured Forsyth that the plan, if followed, would result not merely in the acquisition of Texas but eventually in the dominion of the United States "over the whole of that tract of territory known as New Mexico, and higher and lower California, an empire in itself, a paradise in climate . . . rich in minerals and affording a water route to the Pacific through the Arkansas and Colorado rivers."³⁷

This letter met with cool response from the President.³⁸ Nevertheless, after an interview with Butler he allowed him, at his earn-

Jackson, Oct. 28, 1833, *Ibid.*); Jackson warns Butler against employing corrupt means (Jackson to Butler, Nov. 27, *Ibid.*); Butler insists that "resort must be had to bribery," or "presents if the term is more appropriate" (Butler to Jackson, Feb. 6, 1834, *Ibid.*). Later Butler writes McLane that "bribery and corruption" are the sole means of bringing the negotiation to a successful issue. (Butler to McLane, MS., State Department.) Some of these letters are mentioned by Rives.

³⁵Butler to Jackson, June 6, 1834. Jackson MSS.; same to same, Oct. 20 (*Ibid.*). It is interesting to note that Butler thought his negotiations for Texas had been thwarted by Stephen F. Austin whom he charged in a letter to McLane with being "one of the bitterest foes to our government and people that is to be found in Mexico." Butler to McLane, July 13, 1834. MS., State Department.

³⁶Butler to Forsyth, June 17, 1835 (MS., State Department). See also Rives, as cited, I, 257-258.

³⁷Butler to Forsyth, June 17 (quoted also in Reeves, 73-74).

³⁸It is endorsed, " . . . Nothing will be countenanced to bring the government under the remotest imputation of being engaged in corruption or bribery . . . A. J." See also Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348; and Rives, I, 258.

est solicitation, to return to his post in Mexico.³⁹ Before Butler left, however, the suggestion he had thrown out with regard to "higher California" received additional impulse from another source. On August 1, William A. Slacum, a purser in the United States Navy, wrote a letter to the President which, according to Adams, "kindled the passion of Andrew Jackson for the thirty-seventh line of latitude from the river Arkansas to the South Sea, to include the river and bay of San Francisco, and was the foundation of Forsyth's instruction to Butler of 6 August, 1835."⁴⁰

These instructions mentioned by Adams give the first official attempt of the United States to secure from Mexico any part of her territory on the Pacific. The chief object, as expressed by Forsyth, was to obtain possession of San Francisco Bay which had been "represented to the President"⁴¹ as "a most desirable place of resort for our numerous vessels engaged in the whaling business in the Pacific, far superior to any to which they now have access."⁴² No definite sum which Butler was authorized to offer was specified in the dispatch, but Adams places it as \$500,000.⁴³ It should also be noted that Forsyth expressly disclaimed any desire to secure territory south of San Francisco.⁴⁴

³⁹It may be added that Butler's presence there was desired neither by Mexicans nor American residents. John Baldwin to Forsyth, Vera Cruz, Nov. 14, 1835. MS., State Department. Miscellaneous Letters.

⁴⁰Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348. The name of the writer here is given as Slocum, but this is plainly an error. This particular letter unfortunately has disappeared from the files of the State Department where Adams saw it in 1843, but from the correspondence still on record there can be no doubt that the name Slacum is correct. See Forsyth to Ellis (mentioning Slacum's name), April 14, 1836; Ellis to Monasterio, March 8, 1836; &c., &c.; also Slacum's *Report* in *Reports of Committees*, 25 Cong., 3 sess., No. 101, pp. 29-45. Slacum, we learn from the documents cited, was made a special agent of the government to the Pacific coast to investigate conditions there, and especially the progress of the Russians and of the Hudson's Bay Company.

⁴¹Perhaps by Slacum, yet Adams's testimony regarding the powerful influence of Slacum's letter of Aug. 1st is somewhat weakened by the fact that Jackson had instructed Forsyth to enlarge the scope of Butler's negotiations as early as July 25. *Memoirs*, XI, 361-362.

⁴²*H. Ex. Docs.*, 25 Cong., 1 sess., No. 42, pages 18-19.

⁴³Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 348.

⁴⁴"We have no desire to interfere with the actual settlements of Mexico on that coast and you may agree to any provision affecting the great object of securing the bay of San Francisco and excluding Monterey and

The proposition thus entrusted to Butler was doubtless never submitted to the Mexican government. On December 27, Butler wrote the Department that it would be useless to push the negotiations at that time, though there was a chance of securing certain commercial privileges for American vessels at San Francisco.⁴⁵ A few months later he received notice of his recall,⁴⁶ and shortly afterwards left Mexico, carrying off "some of the most important papers of the negotiation."⁴⁷

Indeed, Butler's whole course was one of consistent dishonor. The most surprising part of it, however, was the ease with which he continually hoodwinked and misled his own government; and after reading his correspondence one is freely willing to agree with Adams, that "for six long years he was mystifying Jackson with the positive assurance that he was within a hair's breadth of the object and sure of success, while Jackson was all the time wriggling along and snapping at the bait, like a mackerel after a red rag."⁴⁸ It may be further added that Jackson's estimate of Butler was even lower than that of Adams. An endorsement on Butler's letter of March 7, 1834, declared him a "scamp," and when, in 1843, Butler charged Jackson with consenting to his schemes of bribery, the venerable ex-President wrote another endorsement pronouncing him a "liar," in whom there was "neither truth, justice, or gratitude," and whose whole accusation was "a tissue of falsehood and false colourings."⁴⁹

Jackson's later attempts.—After Butler's summary dismissal nothing apparently was done toward carrying out the instructions

the territory in its immediate neighborhood . . ." Forsyth to Butler, as cited.

⁴⁵Butler to Forsyth (MS., State Department).

⁴⁶Same to same, Jan. 15, 1836, *Ibid.* Butler claimed that his prospects for bringing the negotiation to a close were exceedingly favorable when cut short by his recall.

⁴⁷Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 349. The statement of Adams is corroborated by a letter of Asbury Dickens, Acting Secretary of State, to Butler's successor, and by one of Butler's own letters to Jackson. Dickens to Powhatan Ellis, Aug. 19, 1836. MS., State Department; Butler to Jackson, July 28, 1843. Jackson MSS.

⁴⁸Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 368.

⁴⁹Endorsement by Jackson on the back of Butler's letter of July 28, 1843. Butler in this letter also stated that Jackson had promised him the governorship of Texas if he procured its annexation. This Jackson hotly denied in his endorsement.

contained in Forsyth's despatch of August 6. But Jackson before his administration closed made two further tentative efforts to secure California. About the middle of January, 1837,⁵⁰ Santa Anna arrived in Washington, after his liberation by General Houston, to request the mediation of the United States between Texas and Mexico.⁵¹ In expectation of his request, or after it was definitely made, Jackson had drawn up the general terms upon which this government would assume the undertaking. That which concerns us, reads as follows:

If Mexico will extend the line of the U. States to the Rio Grand—up that stream to latitude 38 north and then to the Pacific including north California we might instruct our minister to give them three millions and a half of dollars and deal then as it respected Texas as a magnanimous nation ought—to wit (?)—in the treaty with Mexico secure the Texians in all their just and legal rights and stipulate to admit them into the United States as one of the Union.⁵²

At the time that Jackson was making this proposal to Santa Anna he was also urging upon W. H. Wharton, the Texan Minister at Washington, the necessity of including California within the limits of Texas in order to reconcile the commercial interests of the north and east to annexation by giving them a harbor on the Pacific. "He is very earnest and anxious on this point of claiming the Californias," wrote Wharton to Rusk in reporting Jackson's suggestion, "and says we must not consent to less. This is in strict confidence. Glory to God in the highest!"⁵³

⁵⁰Wharton to Austin, Jan. 17, 1837. Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, I, 176-177, in *American Historical Association Report*, 1907, II.

⁵¹Thomas Maitland Marshall, "The southern boundary of Texas 1821-1840," in *THE QUARTERLY*, XIV, 285.

⁵²Rough draft in Jackson's hand on single sheet, unsigned and undated. Jackson MSS. of the year 1836.

⁵³Wharton to Rusk, Jan. 24, 1837. Garrison, *Dip. Cor. Texas*, I, 193-194; also Marshall, as cited. The extension of the Texas boundaries to the Pacific along the 30th parallel had been considered by the Texan government and rejected, chiefly because the territory was too large and thinly populated for government by a "young Republic." This decision had been reported to Jackson before he urged upon Wharton the necessity of including California as a means of reconciling the north. Report of Jackson's special agent, Henry Morfit, to the President. *H. Ex. Docs.*, 24 Cong., 2 sess., No. 35, pages 11-12.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF INTEREST DURING THE VAN BUREN AND TYLER
ADMINISTRATIONS

During Van Buren's administration no official action toward the acquisition of California was attempted. The straitened condition of the treasury precluded any idea of purchase, even had Mexico manifested a willingness to sell; while the strained relations existing between the two nations throughout the greater part of this period served as an equally effective barrier.¹ Nevertheless the affairs of the distant Mexican province were more than once brought to the attention of the United States and interest in its resources and ultimate destiny grew with every passing year.

Rebellion of 1836.—The first of these local events to attract attention was the revolution begun in the fall of 1836 by several of the prominent native Californians against the Mexican governor, Nicolás Gutiérrez. Without great difficulty the leaders² in this movement accomplished their purpose, and after shipping Gutiérrez back to Mexico, placed one of their own number, Juan B. Alvarado, in the governor's chair.³

The success of this rebellion against Mexican authority was significant for two reasons. In the first place it was made possible largely through the aid furnished by a company of foreigners,

¹Powhatan Ellis, the American chargé d'affaires to Mexico, had demanded his passports in December, 1836, following Mexico's failure to adjust the claims of American citizens, and for three years the United States was without a representative at Mexico (*Reeves, Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk, etc.*, 76). The chief source of difficulty between the two nations were the recognition of Texan independence by the United States on the one hand; and the long continued refusal of Mexico to settle the American claims on the other.

²The leaders in this revolution were Juan B. Alvarado, inspector of the Monterey custom house, holder of certain civil offices and a man of great popularity; José Castro, governor of California preceding Gutiérrez; and Mariano G. Vallejo, who, though taking no active part, lent the weight of his powerful influence to the other leaders. Bancroft, XX, 445-447, *passim*.

³The authorities for the revolution of 1836 are numerous. The foregoing account has been taken chiefly from Bancroft, XX, 445-578; Franklin Tuthill, *The History of California*, 141-145; and various works of less importance. Full citation of all authorities on the subject are given in Bancroft.

mostly American trappers, led by Isaac Graham, a Tennessean of the typical border ruffian type. And in the second place it gave promise for a time of assuming the characteristics and proportions of the Texas movement for independence.⁴ But as the California leaders probably had no very great desire for actual separation from Mexico, its net result was merely the substitution of a native governor for one of Mexican appointment.

Exaggerated rumors of this disturbance soon began to circulate throughout the United States, and it was even reported to the State Department that California, having declared her independence, was on the eve of asking the protection of the Russians at Bodega—an event which would mean, said the writer, the United States consul at the Sandwich Islands, the unification of the Russians and Californians and the extension of the Czar's power from the Bay of San Francisco to the Columbia River.⁵

Kelley's Memoir.—During the administration of Van Buren the question of the occupation of Oregon came also to be of critical importance;⁶ and, as a natural consequence, California received a certain amount of the nation's interest. In a supplemental report on the Oregon territory submitted to Congress, February 16, 1839, by the committee of foreign affairs, many of the documents contained references to California. While one of them, a memoir by Hall J. Kelley, the eccentric emigration enthusiast of Massachusetts, devoted more than half its space to a description of that country. "I extend my remarks to this part of California," from San Francisco northward, wrote Kelley in explanation, "because it has been and may again be, made the subject of conference and negotiation between Mexico and the United States; and because its future addition to our western possessions is most unquestionably a matter to be desired."⁷

⁴According to Tuthill a lone star flag was prepared, but the Californians were either afraid to substitute it for the Mexican emblem or did not care to do so. Tuthill, 142-143.

⁵United States consul, Sandwich Islands, to the Secretary of State, *Semi-annual report*, March 12, 1837 (Thomas Savage, *Documentos para la historia de California*, II, 174-176. MS., Bancroft Collection, University of California Library). The greater part of this report was devoted to a description of California.

⁶Greenhow, 375-376, and United States government documents there cited.

⁷*Committee Reports*, 25 Cong., 3 sess., No. 101, p. 48. Kelley's com-

Affairs between 1836-1840.—It cannot be said, however, in spite of such efforts as those put forth by Kelley, that the years between 1836 and 1840 were distinguished by any marked increase of immigration from the United States into California.⁸ The early traffic along the coast in furs had materially decreased; and even inland, the business was becoming less remunerative. Yet the great interior valleys still offered lucrative fields for the roving bands of American, English, and French trappers who, when not engaged in their ordinary trade, frequently made additional profit by driving off the horses of the Californians, or by joining thieving expeditions sent out by the Indians for the same purpose.⁹ The hide and tallow trade likewise continued to flourish,¹⁰ and remained so completely a monopoly of the New England merchants, so far at least as Americans were concerned,¹¹ that, on the coast, Boston and the United States became synonymous terms.¹² An occasional vessel from the government's South Pacific squadron touched at California ports;¹³ a trade in cattle between Oregon and the region around San Francisco served to bring these two territories into closer relationships;¹⁴ the publication of various

plete memoir, addressed to Caleb Cushing, is on pp. 3-61; his description of California occupies pp. 48-53.

⁸Bancroft, XXI, 117. The number of foreign adults residing in California at this time is placed at 380.

⁹John Bidwell, *California in 1841-8*. MS., Bancroft Collection, 99.

¹⁰The vessels engaged in this trade, usually of four or five hundred tons burden, with cargoes of shoes, hats, furniture, farming implements, chinaware, iron, hardware, crockery, etc., valued at forty or fifty thousand dollars in California, spent usually three years each on the coast before returning to New England. They sold largely on credit, evaded the Mexican tariff laws by paying five or six hundred dollars for the privilege of selling goods from place to place, and received from the Californians instead of money, hides, tallow, dried beef, lumber, and soap. See Thomas O. Larkin, *Description of California*, 99, in his *Official Correspondence*, Bancroft Collection; same to Secretary of State, Jan. 1, 1845, *Ibid.*, Pt. II, No. 16.

¹¹Yet see *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 356, for a St. Louis owned vessel engaged in this trade.

¹²Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years before the Mast* (Boston. 1869), 169.

¹³The U. S. S. *Peacock* arrived at Monterey in October, 1836, having been requested to visit the California coast because of the disturbances arising from the revolt of that year. The American merchants of the Sandwich Islands who had large interests at stake in California were the principal petitioners. Bancroft, XXI, 140-2.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 85-87; Slacum's *Report*, 39.

books upon California's resources and political condition tended to attract the attention of the outside world;¹⁵ and, finally, the coming of John A. Sutter in 1839 and the establishment of his fort at New Helvetia, the present site of the capital of the State, saved the period under discussion from being by any means barren of results for the American interests.

Neither should the reflexive influence of the events in Texas be omitted in this connection. We have already mentioned the revolution in 1836 and the reports that California was preparing to follow the steps of her sister province. The American mind, especially in the west, had never a high conception of the Mexican people; the ease with which Texas won her independence and the senseless atrocities of the Mexican soldiers had served to increase this feeling to a considerable extent; and restless spirits were already advocating a re-enactment of the scenes of Texas in California. Immigration, however, had not furnished sufficient Americans for carrying out such a program, but it was freely prophesied that these would shortly come.

"To such men as the Back-settlers distance is of little moment," wrote Alexander Forbes in 1838,

and they are already acquainted with the route. The north American tide of population must roll on southward, and overwhelm not only California but other more important states. This latter event, however, is in the womb of time; but the invasion of California by American settlers is daily talked of; and if Santa Anna had prevailed against Texas a portion of its inhabitants sufficient to overrun California would now have been its masters.¹⁶

The Graham affair.—So common had become these rumors by 1840 that in April of that year nearly a hundred¹⁷ English and

¹⁵The most representative books of this period were Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*, and Alexander Forbes's *California: A history of Upper and Lower California* (London. Smith, Elder and Company. 1839). For a review of this latter work and the interest it aroused see *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 70. Numerous other books were written by travelers who visited California during this period, but as they were not published until later no mention is made of them in this place.

¹⁶Forbes, *History of California*, 152.

¹⁷Larkin to Secretary of State, April 20, 1844—one hundred arrested; fifty sent in irons to San Blas, thence overland to Tepic. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 6.

American residents in California, who were without passports, were suddenly arrested for engaging in a plot to overthrow the government and declare the country independent of Mexican control.¹⁸ Chief of these so-called conspirators was Isaac Graham, whose name has already been mentioned in connection with the revolt of the Californians four years before.

Graham and some fifty of his companions, after undergoing a farcical trial at Santa Barbara and some pretty severe treatment at the hands of the California officials, were shipped down the coast and thence to Tepic. Here the English consul, Barron, and Alexander Forbes secured the release of most of the prisoners and a speedy trial for the remainder, which resulted in their acquittal. Some received immediate indemnity for their losses and ill-treatment; others returned to California to secure legal evidence against the government, being aided in this by a vessel of the United States navy.¹⁹

The illegal arrest of such a large number of American citizens naturally excited some comment in the United States. Powhatan Ellis, who had returned as Minister to Mexico in 1839, was instructed to demand satisfaction for the treatment accorded his countrymen and their immediate release if still in captivity.²⁰

¹⁸Commandancia General de California al E. S. Ministro de Guerra y Marina (Mexico), April 25, 1840. In this communication the chief object of the conspirators was said to be control of the whole stretch of territory around San Francisco Bay. M. G. Vallejo, *Documentos para la historia de California*, IX, No. 124. MSS., Bancroft Collection. See also Nos. 108, 110-111, *Ibid.*; Bancroft, XXI, 11-14, and authorities cited; Alfred Robinson, *Life in California* (New York. Wiley & Putnam. 1846), 180-184.

¹⁹Albert J. Morris, *Diary of a Crazy Man, or An Account of the Graham Affair of 1840* (MS., Bancroft Collection). Morris was one of the English prisoners, employed in a distillery at the time of his arrest, by Graham. His picture of the sufferings endured at the hands of the California officials is very vivid and probably but little exaggerated. Most of those arrested, however, were insolent, overbearing, and an altogether undesirable class of citizens. See, also, Bancroft, XXI, 1-41; Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Life and Adventures in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (New York. W. H. Graham. 1846), 70 *et seq.* Farnham followed the prisoners from Monterey to Santa Barbara and later to Tepic. His account, however, is too biased to be relied upon. Tuthill, *History of California*, 145-147.

²⁰Forsyth to Ellis, Aug. 21, 1840; same to same, July 1, 1841. MSS., State Department.

It should also be noted that this event first called the official attention of the British government to California. See Ephraim Douglass

Reports of the affair soon found their way into print and for a long time served as proof positive for American readers of the cruelty of the Californians.²¹ Later, also, the non-payment of indemnity by Mexico was made the subject of official protest;²² while several years afterwards, Polk was assured by his confidential agent that no claim or demand so strong as that of the Graham prisoners could be brought against Mexico to secure a cession of California.²³

As a further result of these arbitrary proceedings against foreigners, a petition was drawn up by the merchants of the California coast, many of whom, however, had little use for Graham and those of his ilk,²⁴ praying that a United States ship might be stationed permanently in California waters because of the insecurity of property, arbitrariness of the authorities, and mockery of justice prevailing in the province.²⁵ This request met with prompt recognition from the Secretary of the Navy, Abel P. Upshur, who on December 4, 1841 announced in his annual report to Congress that the protection of American interests in California demanded an increase of the government's naval force in the Pacific, and shortly afterwards despatched Commodore Ap Catesby Jones to take command of the enlarged squadron.²⁶

Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846* (Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1910), 236-237.

²¹*Niles' Register*, LVIII, 371. Farnham's account was especially bitter against the Californians. Earlier editions of this book, under various titles, were published in 1841-3-4.

²²Thompson to Bocanegra, Dec. 31, 1843. MS., State Department. Mexico afterwards paid part of this. Thompson to Secretary of State, February 2, 1844. *Ibid.*

²³Larkin to Secretary of State, June 15, 1846. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 47.

²⁴Bancroft, XXI, 7-8, and notes.

²⁵MS., State Department, Mexico, 1840, No. 10.

²⁶Report of the Secretary of the Navy. *Senate Docs.*, 27 Cong., 1 sess., I, No. 1, pp. 368-369. Upshur dwelt at considerable length upon the Graham affair, spoke of the increased immigration to California, and said that the insecurity of American interests there demanded the protection of a naval force. The whale fisheries in the Pacific likewise required the presence of several United States vessels in the ocean; and the Gulf of California should be more thoroughly explored and charted.

For an explanation of this increase by Upshur of the Pacific squadron as a deep laid plot on the part of the slave holders to seize California, see William Jay, *A Review of the Causes and Consequences of the Mexican War* (Boston, Philadelphia, New York. 1849), 81-82.

Immigration 1840-1.—More important, however, for the American cause than any of the results that came from the arrest of Graham and his companions, was the beginning of organized emigration to California during the years 1840-1841. The reports spread by trappers, adventurers, travellers, and Americans residing in California, had by this time begun to bear definite fruit. The west, especially, had become interested in the Pacific Coast and looked to Oregon and California as fields for future settlement. So great was the enthusiasm in Platte County, Missouri, for example, that public meetings were held, committees appointed, and a pledge drawn up, to which five hundred names were appended, binding its signers to convert their property into emigrant outfits and start in the following May²⁷ from the rendezvous at Sapling Grove, Kansas, for California. Though a number of circumstances served to cool this ardor,²⁸ and only forty-eight persons left for California at the time agreed upon,²⁹ the departure of these is significant as foreshadowing a movement that, with occasional interruption, was to continue with increasing energy during the next five years.

John Bidwell, a member of this early party, has left us a typical story of how he and his neighbors and many another family of the west became interested in California between 1840 and the outbreak of the Mexican War. At the time of which we are speaking, Bidwell's neighborhood had become considerably excited over the stories of one whom he described as a "calm, considerate man" by the name of Rubidoux. This story-telling traveller,

²⁷Bidwell, *California*; Josiah Belden, *Historical statement* (MS., Bancroft Collection); Bancroft, XXI, 264-75.

The immediate causes of this enthusiasm for a migration to California were letters received from Dr. John Marsh, an American resident of California, and the stories of Rubidoux.

²⁸One cause given both by Bidwell and Bancroft was the efforts of Missouri merchants to discourage the movement, through misrepresentations of California.

²⁹Only one of these, Bidwell, had signed the original pledge. The party left May 19, under the command of John Bartleson, in company with a second band of seventeen persons bound for Oregon under the direction of a noted trapper, Fitzpatrick. They followed the usual route of hunters and traders to the Rocky Mountains—"up the north fork of the Platte, by the Sweetwater through the South Pass, and down and up branches of Green River, to Bear River Valley near Great Salt Lake" Bancroft, XXI, 268-269. Here they separated, some of the California party joining the Oregonians, and the remainder, pressing on, eventually reached Marsh's rancho in November, after considerable hardship.

whose brother Joseph was a well-known western trader, having recently returned from a trip to California, brought back such marvelous reports of the productiveness of its soil and the genial qualities of its climate, that a public meeting was held "to hear more about this wonderful country on the Pacific Coast." When Rubidoux had finished his address before this gathering, repeating perhaps in a more formal way what he had already told many in private conversation, he became the target of questions from the audience. One easily imagines the form these took, regarding some particular phase of California conditions in which individuals were interested; or in respect to the length and hardships of the overland journey.

One ague-racked member of the assembly even wanted to know if chills and fever prevailed in that country which Rubidoux had described as a "perfect paradise, a perpetual spring." "There never was but one man in California who had the chills," replied Rubidoux. "He was from Missouri and carried the disease in his system. It was such a curiosity to see a man shake with the chills that the people of Monterey went eighteen miles into the country to see him."³⁰ Unfortunately Bidwell neglects to state how many of the forty-eight who eventually left Sapling Grove were influenced by this answer to seek an escape from the malaria of the Mississippi Valley and the mournful sufferings to which so many of the early settlers were exposed.

The growing interest of the United States was not wholly confined to the west during these years, however. Notice of the emigrant parties that were leaving Missouri was printed in the eastern papers. In Rochester, New York, John J. Warner, while advocating the building of a railroad across the continent to the Columbia, devoted much of his public lectures to a description of California and the advantages of San Francisco Bay.³¹ Harvey Baldwin, from the same neighborhood, perhaps influenced by Warner, addressed a long letter to the president, contrasting the commercial importance and resources of California with the comparative worthlessness of the Oregon territory and urging him to take immediate

³⁰Bidwell, *California*, 5-6.

³¹Warner's lecture was printed in the *New York Journal of Commerce* and in the *Colonial Magazine*, V, 229-236. Bancroft, XXI, 223.

steps toward its acquisition.³² It was in the summer of 1841, also, that an exploring expedition of six vessels under command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes reached San Francisco Bay, with special instructions from the government to make careful surveys of that harbor.³³ And thus in many ways³⁴ the people and government of the United States were kept in touch with California and its affairs during the early part of the decade beginning with 1840.

Attitude of the Californians.—The feeling among the California officials over the arrival of the immigrant parties of 1841 was one partly of alarm and partly of acquiescence. Early in May, 1841, General Almonte, Mexican Minister of War, wrote to Vallejo, the Comandante General of California, concerning the reported emigration of fifty-eight families from Missouri, and gave strict orders that every foreigner should be compelled to show a passport or leave the country. In the despatch Almonte had also enclosed a clipping from the *National Intelligencer* regarding "the convenience and necessity of the acquisition of the Californias by the United States" and one of similar tenor from the Washington "*Glova*."³⁵ Nor, with such evidence at hand, is it surprising that he further warned Vallejo to put but little trust in the alleged claim of the Americans that they were coming with peaceful intentions. The Texas immigrants had made the same false assertion.

But in spite of this command from Mexico, the Californians showed little desire to molest the respectable class of settlers from the United States. The members of the Bartleson party were compelled to explain their presence in the country and submit to the formalities of a nominal arrest after which they were free to

³²Baldwin to Tyler, Jan. 19, 1843, enclosing a copy of a letter to Van Buren, of Sept. 27, 1840. MS., State Department, Miscellaneous Letters, 1843. Baldwin perhaps was interested in a personal way in the acquisition of California. He suggested in his communication that the American claims might be made the basis for negotiation; while Jay (*Mexican War*, 37, 40, 43) mentions a Baldwin as one of the claimants.

³³Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838-42* (Philadelphia, 1845), I, page XXVII; Davis, *Sixty Years in California*, 127 et seq., says Wilkes stated this was with the view of future acquisition.

³⁴The rumor of English activities in California was one of the most potent factors at this time. *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 2, 70. Further mention of this is, however, reserved for future discussion.

³⁵Vallejo, *Documentos*, No. 146.

go and come as they pleased.³⁶ While the reception of those arriving by the southern route, though tinged somewhat with suspicion, was equally free from any manifestations of hostility.³⁷

Efforts of Waddy Thompson.—A period of renewed activity in the efforts of the United States to gain possession of California, began with the accession of Tyler to the presidency. Shortly before his recall from Mexico, Powhatan Ellis had written to Webster, then Secretary of State, urging the necessity of securing certain ports on the Pacific on account of the increase of American commerce and the growing importance of the whale fisheries.³⁸ While with the coming of Waddy Thompson as United States minister, a very definite movement was set on foot looking to the purchase of the territory.³⁹

In his first despatch to the home government, Thompson showed himself a surprising enthusiast for such an acquisition. Mexico, he thought, would be willing to cede both California and Texas in return for a cancellation of the American claims against her.⁴⁰ But of the two, Texas was by far the less desirable, having no comparison in value with California—"the richest, the most beautiful, and healthiest country in the world." Control of Upper California, continued Thompson, would eventually mean the ascendancy of the United States over the whole Pacific. The bay of San Francisco was "capacious enough to receive the navies of all the world," while the neighboring forests could supply timber sufficient "to build all the ships of these navies." With this bay in her possession, and the harbors of San Diego and Monterey, the nation would have not only necessary ports for her whaling

³⁶A second party numbering twenty-five, organized partly in Missouri and partly from Americans in New Mexico, had reached Los Angeles via the Santa Fé Trail about the time the Bartleson company arrived in the north. The Californians at first were afraid that these had been concerned in the Texan expedition against Santa Fé (Bancroft, XXI, 276-287).

³⁷*Ibid.*, 274-275.

³⁸Ellis to Webster, Jan. 22, 1842 (MS., State Department). On March 10th, Thomas Carlile was appointed consul at San Francisco by Tyler. Webster to Thompson, April 8, 1842. MS., State Department.

³⁹Thompson reached Vera Cruz April 10, 1842. See Waddy Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York and London. Wiley and Putnam. 1847), 1.

⁴⁰This was the only way in which Thompson saw any hope of Mexican creditors receiving satisfaction.

vessels; but by opening up internal communication with the Arkansas and other western streams, could "secure the trade of India and the whole Pacific Ocean."

In agricultural lines, also, Thompson was assured that California would prove of immense value to the United States, and one day become the "granary of the Pacific." He also believed that, as slavery was not necessary there, the north and south could arrange another compromise. "I am profoundly satisfied," he concluded, after warning Webster against the designs of France and England upon the territory,

that in its bearing upon all the interests of our country, agricultural, political, manufacturing, commercial and fishing, the importance of the acquisition of California cannot be overestimated. If I could mingle any selfish feelings with interests to my country so vast, I would desire no higher honor than to be an instrument in securing it.⁴¹

Ten days after he had written this despatch to the Secretary of State, Thompson sent one of like tenor to the president. "Since my despatch to Mr. Webster," he began,

I have had an interview with Gen. Santa Anna and although I did not broach to him directly the subject of our correspondence I have but little doubt that I shall be able to accomplish your wishes and to add also the acquisition of Upper California.

This latter, I believe, will be by far the most important event that has occurred to our country. Do me the favor to read my despatch to Mr. Webster in which my views of the matter are briefly sketched—I should be most happy to illustrate your administration and my own name by an acquisition of such lasting benefit to my own country.

Upon this subject I beg your special instructions, both as to moving on the matter and the extent to which I am to go in the negotiations and the amount to be paid. The acquisition of Upper California will reconcile the northern people as they have large fishing and commercial interests in the Pacific and we have literally no port there. Be pleased also to have me pretty strongly instructed on the subject of our claims or leave the responsibility

⁴¹Thompson to Webster, April 29, 1842. MS., State Department. Much of the substance of this despatch was afterwards embodied by Thompson in his *Recollections* (pp. 233-238). A summary is also printed in Reeves, 100-101, but the quotations are not *verbatim* as the text would seem to indicate. See also Rives's *The United States and Mexico*, II, 46.

to me. Procrastination, the policy of all weak governments, is peculiarly so with this, and they are very poor and will never pay us one farthing unless pretty strong measures are taken.⁴²

Late in June Webster answered Thompson's despatches, giving him full liberty to sound the Mexican government upon the subject of ceding a portion of her territory on the Pacific in satisfaction of all, or a part of the American claims. "Although it is desirable that you should present the Port and Harbor of St. Francisco as the prominent object to be obtained," wrote Webster, "yet if a cession should be made, the Province would naturally accompany the Port. It may be useful however for divers reasons, that the convenience and benefit of the Port itself, should at least for the present, be spoken of as what is chiefly desired by the United States." In conclusion, Thompson was advised to proceed in a circumspect manner with the negotiations, and especially warned against giving the impression that the United States was eager for the purchase, since it would be far better to convey the idea that she was willing to settle the debt in this way simply for the convenience of Mexico.⁴³

During the summer of 1842 one further communication regarding California came from Thompson; but this, being in the form of a warning against English encroachments, will be considered in another connection. Toward the close of the year all thought of negotiation was temporarily cut short, as it happened, when Webster was especially anxious to secure Mexico's consent to the tripartite agreement,⁴⁵ by the seizure of the port of Monterey by Commodore Jones, who, as we have seen, had been placed in command of the Pacific squadron by Secretary Upshur nearly a year before.

The details of this incident have been described so frequently that it would be useless to repeat them here.⁴⁶ It may simply

⁴²Thompson to Tyler, May 9, 1842. MS., State Department; mentioned also by Reeves, 101.

⁴³Webster to Thompson, June 27, 1842, in *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (National Edition. Boston. Little, Brown & Company. 1903), XIV, 611-612. See also Reeves, 102, for different portions of the same letter.

⁴⁵See below, pp. 35-7.

⁴⁶Bancroft, XXI, 298-329; Lyon G. Tyler, *Letters and Times of the Tylers* (Richmond. Whittet & Shepperson. 1885), II, 265-267; H. Von

be said that the American commander, convinced by various reports that the United States and Mexico were at war⁴⁷ and that the latter was on the point of ceding California to Great Britain,⁴⁸ sailed as rapidly as possible from Callao to Monterey, which he took possession of without opposition, beyond a formal protest from the California officials. The next day, realizing that he had made a mistake, Jones surrendered the town to its former owners with formal apology for his error.

The seizure of Monterey, so far as the Californians themselves were concerned, seems to have been taken pretty much as a matter of course. A full report was forwarded to the Mexican Government⁴⁹ and the authorities at Los Angeles availed themselves of the opportunity to charge the captain of one of Jones's vessels, the *Alert*, with spiking the artillery at San Diego and injuring the harbor.⁵⁰ American residents were naturally uneasy for a time lest they should suffer from the ill-will engendered among the Californians by the occurrence,⁵¹ but their fears were entirely groundless.⁵²

Holst, *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States* (Chicago. Callaghan and Company. 1881), II, 615-620; *H. Ex. Docs.*, 27 Cong., 3 Sess., No. 166, for official account. Many of the secondary accounts were written with a decided bias against the American commander. For example, Jay (pp. 82-86) described it as wholly a move on the part of the slave-holding South.

⁴⁷Jones obtained his information from a letter written by John Parrott, the United States consul at Mazatlan, on June 22. Enclosed was a copy of *El Cosmoplita* of June 4, containing the threatening letters of Bocanegra to Webster concerning the Texas difficulties. Rumors of war were common all along the Pacific coast at the time (Johnson to Larkin, Honolulu, May 26, 1842—"word received from the United States that war may be declared any day." Larkin MSS., I, No. 276; Davis to Larkin, May 30, 1842—"war declared against Mexico." *Ibid.*). Larkin's *Official Correspondence* is designated as such; his private correspondence will hereafter be referred to simply as above—Larkin MSS.

⁴⁸A copy of a Boston paper, with an extract from the New Orleans *Courier* of April 19, stating that Mexico had ceded California to England for \$7,000,000, had fallen into his hands. The departure of Admiral Thomas with a British fleet under sealed orders from Callao, lent additional weight to the rumor.

⁴⁹Bocanegra to Thompson, Dec. 28, 1841. MS., State Department.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹I. C. Jones, a resident of Santa Barbara, wrote that he considered the seizure of Monterey the act of a madman, which would be followed by deplorable results for all Americans in California. He was, however, a confirmed pessimist. Jones to Larkin, Larkin MSS., I, No. 357.

⁵²Larkin to Secretary of State, April 16, 1844—Contrary to expectations Jones's action did not engender any ill-will among the Californians

In Mexico, however, a different spirit prevailed. Jones had reported his action both to the authorities at Washington and to Waddy Thompson at Mexico City.⁵³ Without waiting for instructions from the department, the American minister at once disavowed the seizure of the California town and promised satisfaction for any loss thereby sustained.⁵⁴ Jones was recalled and temporarily deprived of his command; while Webster made formal apologies in the name of the government for the proceedings. But beyond this, in the infliction of a far heavier penalty demanded by the Mexican Minister upon the American commodore, both Webster and Tyler refused to go.⁵⁵

In the United States, also, the capture of Monterey furnished John Quincy Adams and others of his kind with fresh ammunition for onslaughts against the administration and its policy of annexing Mexican territory.⁵⁶ Reports of these attacks and overdrawn charges made by the Americans against the American president reached Mexico, and served to increase there the spirit of hostility and suspicion already engendered by the incident.⁵⁷ So that Thompson was compelled to notify his government that it was "wholly out of the question to do anything as to California and after recent events there it would be imprudent to allude to it in any way," the only possibility of securing territory at all lying in a cession of San Francisco some time in the future when Mexico should find herself unable to pay the awards of the American claims.⁵⁸

but had rather the reverse effect. Larkin, *Official Correspondence*, Pt. II, No. 4.

⁵³Jones to Thompson, Oct. 22, 1842. MS., State Department.

⁵⁴Reeves, 106. Thompson was not officially notified to take this course for some months. Webster to Thompson, Jan. 27, 1843. MS., State Department.

⁵⁵Tyler to Webster, Jan. —, 1843. Webster MSS., Library of Congress; same to same, Feb. 9, 1843. Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 267.

⁵⁶For Adams's attitude, see his *Memoirs*, XI, 304 *et seq.*

⁵⁷Thompson to Webster, Jan. 5, 1843—"They are printing in all their newspapers the speech of Mr. Adams made in Massachusetts, and with most injurious effect as it confirms all their unfounded suspicions against us." MS., State Department.

⁵⁸Thompson to Webster, Jan. 30, 1843. Webster MSS. A new scheme connecting California with these unpaid claims had also been suggested to Webster by Brantz Mayer, formerly secretary of legation under Thompson, upon his return to Washington. Mayer's plan, instead of requiring

The proposed Tripartite Agreement.—While this correspondence was being carried on with the American minister at Mexico City, Webster was also making tentative efforts to bring about an arrangement between Great Britain, Mexico and the United States for the settlement of the three vexed questions of Texas, Oregon, and California. As early as the summer of 1842, when Lord Ashburton was in this country as special commissioner, Webster had approached him with the suggestion of settling the Oregon boundary line by ceding the American claims to territory north of the Columbia to Great Britain, in return for a portion of California that should be purchased from Mexico by the two nations in common.⁵⁹

By the beginning of 1843 this idea had come to assume an important place in the plans of the administration.⁶⁰ Thompson was instructed to sound the Mexican government on the subject, and it was likewise brought to the notice of General Almonte, Mexican minister at Washington.⁶¹ As England was known to favor it, a rough outline for the basis of negotiations was sent by Webster to Edward Everett, American ambassador at London.⁶² The terms of this were as follows:

immediate cession on the part of Mexico, substituted a mortgage to be held by the United States chiefly on "such parts of California or such ports in that department as might be serviceable to our trade in the Pacific and useful to us politically." Such a pledge would result in ultimate ownership by the United States or punctual payments on the part of Mexico. Mayer to Webster, Dec. 9, 1842, MS., State Department. It may be added that this plan of a mortgage probably originated in the reports that English creditors held such a pledge. Thompson, who had quarreled with Mayer, considered his letter an extreme liberty even for one of Mayer's characteristic "vanity and impertinence." Thompson to Webster, Jan. 30, 1843. MS., State Department.

⁵⁹Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 260-261; Adams, *Memoirs*, XI, 347.

⁶⁰Reeves (p. 102) rather infers that the California project received scant attention from Webster and Tyler. The documents quoted in the text, it is believed, will contradict this idea.

⁶¹Webster to Everett, Jan. 29, 1843. Webster, *Works*, XVI, 393-396, *passim*.

⁶²Reeves, in a note, p. 103, says that Webster's instructions to Everett, regarding this tripartite agreement, do not appear on file in the State Department. His account has therefore been based wholly on Everett's note to Calhoun of March 28, 1845, in which mention is made of the instructions sent by Webster. See also Schaefer's "British Attitude toward the Oregon Question," *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, XVI, 293-294, note. It is significant that Webster's biographer prints only a part of this letter of Jan. 29, leaving out all portions relating to California or the tripartite agreement.

1. Mexico to cede Upper California to the United States.
2. The United States to pay ——— millions of dollars for the cession.
3. Of this sum, ——— millions to be paid to American claimants against Mexico.
4. The remainder to English creditors or bondholders of Mexico.
5. The Oregon boundary to be settled on the line of the Columbia.⁶³

Both Webster and Tyler felt that this tripartite arrangement would prove the means of satisfying all sections of the country.⁶⁴ Tyler, especially, was anxious to include the admission of California in the terms of any treaty resulting from it, writing to Webster that "Texas might not stand alone, nor . . . the line proposed for Oregon. Texas would reconcile all to the line, while California would reconcile or pacify all to Oregon."⁶⁵ He was even anxious to send Webster on a special mission to Great Britain,⁶⁶ and Webster expressed a willingness to go provided he could settle the Oregon question and obtain California, for Webster had as much desire to secure the latter, if not more, as did Tyler.⁶⁷

The idea of a special mission was, however, cut short by the adverse action of Congress.⁶⁸ Tyler then endeavored to persuade

George Ticknor Curtis, *Life of Daniel Webster* (New York. D. Appleton and Company. 1870), 175-177. George Bancroft, as late as March, 1844, wrote to Van Buren as though this discovery that Webster had been trying to secure California were a great piece of news. It interested Van Buren so much that he tried to find out the details from Silas Wright, who could give him no information. Bancroft to Van Buren, April 11, 1844. Van Buren MSS., Library of Congress. Van Buren's interest doubtless arose from the political value of such information in connection with the question of Texas annexation.

⁶³Webster to Everett, as cited, p. 394.

⁶⁴Webster saw in it the means of winning over the two-thirds vote necessary for the ratification of the boundary treaty with Great Britain (*Ibid.*, 394-395).

⁶⁵Tyler to Webster, undated. Webster MSS.

⁶⁶Same to same, undated. Webster MSS. ". . . what is contemplated is much more important than what has been done. The mission will be large and imposing"—same to same, Feb. 26, 1843. *Ibid.* See, also, Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 261, for the same letters.

⁶⁷For Webster's interest in California, see his letter of Jan. 29, to Everett, already cited so frequently. He afterwards wrote that he considered the bay of San Francisco twenty times more valuable to the United States than all Texas. Curtis, *Life of Webster*, II, 250.

⁶⁸Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 263.

Everett to accept the new embassy to China in order that Webster might take his place in London and carry through the measure under discussion. But Everett, preferring the pleasures of the Court of St. James to the uncertainties of the Mandarin ministry, declined the exchange.⁶⁹ About this time, also, Thompson's despatch of January 30 reached Washington, with the information that it would be useless to approach Mexico regarding the cession of any territory; and Webster, whose days of usefulness in the cabinet were over, and who saw no prospects of effecting anything further, either regarding the adjustment of the Oregon difficulties or the acquisition of California, retired to private life.⁷⁰

Following Webster's resignation, and the death of Hugh S. Legaré, after only a month's service as Secretary *ad interim*, the cabinet was reorganized, and in July, Abel P. Upshur, former Secretary of the Navy, became head of the Department of State.

Effect of Mexican hostility to England.—At this time interest centered primarily in Texas where matters were fast coming to a crisis; but in the fall of 1843 Thompson's despatches began to call attention again to California. On September 28 he wrote that the strong bond of friendship, formerly existing between Mexico and England, was fast giving way to a feeling of hostility that had manifested itself openly in an insult to the British flag.⁷¹ A few days later he reported an interview with Santa Anna in which he had been told that, in the event of a collision with Great Britain, which seemed probable, Mexico would look to the United States to protect California.⁷²

In less than two weeks Thompson again referred to the subject of his conversation with Santa Anna and assured Upshur that if war actually broke out between the two countries, Mexico would certainly cede California to the United States to keep it from falling into English hands. The comparison suggested in this communication seems worthy of note: "You will remember," wrote Thompson, "that it was the fear of the seizure of Louisiana by England that induced Bonaparte to cede it to us. The acquisition of California will be of little less importance . . .

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰His resignation came May 8, 1843.

⁷¹Thompson to Upshur, Sept. 28, 1843. MS., State Department.

⁷²Same to same, Oct. 3. *Ibid.*

There is no prospect whatever of such a cession but in the event of a war between Mexico and England. Then nothing would be easier."⁷³

Order against Americans.—In connection with this subject of the ill will of Mexico toward England the American minister had earlier reported a less hostile feeling prevailing toward his countrymen in Mexico and that the government was coming to look upon them with a far more friendly eye.⁷⁴ If this were true at all, however, the change was of a purely temporary nature. As far back as July 14, an order had been issued to the governor of California,⁷⁵ Manuel Micheltorena, to expel all citizens of the United States from his province and prohibit future immigration.⁷⁶ This, however, did not come under Thompson's notice until late in December, when he at once vigorously protested and demanded its rescission. His communications on the subject remaining unanswered, he threatened next to break off diplomatic relations, and even called for his passports.

Upon this the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations assured him that the order was meant to apply to other foreigners as well as to Americans and had been aimed only at "seditious" inhabitants of the province, to whose governor "very benevolent explanations" had been sent. This, though not satisfactory, was sufficient to prevent Thompson from leaving Mexico, especially as he had no great desire to carry his threat into execution; while upon his further remonstrance, the order was entirely countermanded.⁷⁷ In obtaining the withdrawal of a somewhat

⁷³Thompson to Upshur, Oct. 14, 1843. The omission indicated in quotation represents requests for instructions concerning California. Same to same, Oct. 29. Fear of war with England alone will enable him to conclude a new convention for the settlement of the American claims; see also same to same, Nov. 20, and Jan. 16. MSS., State Department.

⁷⁴Thompson to Upshur, Oct. 20, 1843. MS., State Department.

⁷⁵Also to the Governors of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua.

⁷⁶Bancroft (XXI, 380-1) says there is no evidence that the order ever reached California. Thompson, on the contrary, wrote, in the despatch cited, that Micheltorena assured the Mexican government he had already taken measures to carry out the command. At least, however, it may be said that the law caused no excitement in California or uneasiness among the American residents.

⁷⁷For details regarding this command, see Thompson to Upshur, Jan. 4, 1844 (MS., State Department); Thompson, *Recollections*, 227; *Niles' Register*, LXV, 353.

similar law, prohibiting foreigners from engaging in retail trade either in Mexico or any of her provinces, Thompson was not, however, by any means so successful.⁷⁸

On February 28, 1844, Upshur lost his life by the explosion on board the *Princeton*, and Calhoun took his place in the cabinet, his appointment, according to Duff Green, having been urged for the three-fold purpose of conducting "the negotiation for the annexation of Texas, the purchase of California, and the adjustment of our northwestern boundary."⁷⁹

Hasting's scheme for an independent California.—Ben E. Green, the son of Duff Green, who had been secretary of legation under Thompson, was appointed *chargé* upon the return of the latter to the United States, and entrusted with securing the assent of Mexico to the annexation of Texas.⁸⁰ This was no easy task. Whatever ill-will there had been against England had died away, and though in its place some difficulty had arisen with France, the great weight of Mexican hostility was directed toward the government at Washington. But whether with France or with the United States, Santa Anna was openly advocating a foreign war to develop the nation's resources, and Green could see no benefit to be gained by this country from becoming a party to such a quarrel, "unless, indeed, we should end by gaining possession of California, and thereby secure a harborage for our shipping on the Pacific and one of the finest countries on the Globe."⁸¹

A few days later, having received word of Upshur's death and Calhoun's appointment, Green wrote privately to the latter concerning some information in his possession, which he thought

⁷⁸Thompson(?) to Larkin, United States Legation, Mexico, March 1, 1844. Has continued to hope that order would be rescinded but sees no hope for it now. Clear violation of treaty rights, etc. Larkin MSS., II, No. 66. See, also, Thompson's *Recollections*, 229-230.

⁷⁹Duff Green, *Facts and Suggestions* (New York. Richardson & Co. 1866), 85.

⁸⁰Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 298; statement of Benjamin E. Green, Aug. 8, 1889, *Ibid.*, III, 174-175. Johnston wrote Polk of a rumor that Green was authorized to offer \$10,000,000 to Mexico, and the guaranty to her of the Californias against all other nations. Benton says the treaty when understood is more damnable than the correspondence." Johnston to Polk, May 5, 1844. Polk MSS., Library of Congress.

⁸¹Ben E. Green to Secretary of State, April 8, 1844. MSS., State Department.

might prove important in the Oregon and Texas negotiations.⁸² The substance of this was derived from a confidential interview about three months before with Lansford W. Hastings, a sometime resident of California, of whom we shall also have occasion to speak hereafter.

Hastings, on his way from California to New York, had given Green very positive assurance that a movement for independence was on foot in California, and only waited his return, with a party of emigrants as reinforcements, before materializing. There was also talk in Oregon of uniting with California and forming a separate republic; and the movement once begun would speedily be joined by the Mexican provinces bordering upon Texas.⁸³ The certainty of this was rendered more imminent by Santa Anna's attempt to provoke a war with France, which, if it came and were properly managed, would result in the annexation of the disaffected provinces to Texas. With such an addition of territory, Green warned Calhoun, who was already prone to alarms, "that Texas would no longer desire admission to our Union, but on the contrary would prove a dangerous rival both to the cotton interests of the South and the manufactures of the North."⁸⁴

Efforts of Duff Green.—Following this despatch Calhoun received a more detailed report on California and the whole Mexican situation from a personal interview with Waddy Thompson who returned about this time from Mexico.⁸⁵ The rejection of the Texas treaty in the senate on June 9, however, left little place in the plans of the administration for immediate action regarding

⁸²Green spoke of Calhoun's appointment as "with a view to the Oregon and Texas questions." It is to be noted that, as in this despatch which spoke of Oregon and Texas only in a subordinate relation to California, California was often included under the general heading of "the Oregon question," or the "Texas question."

⁸³As Hastings had given this information to Green three months before, the time for the denouement in California was probably not far away.

⁸⁴Green to Calhoun, April 11, 1844. *Correspondence of John C. Calhoun*, edited by J. Franklin Jameson in *American Historical Association Report*, 1899, II, 945-947. This will hereafter be referred to simply as Calhoun's *Correspondence*.

⁸⁵Same to same, May 30, 1844. *Ibid.*, 961. Calhoun was also informed of the encroachments of the Hudson's Bay Company in California. Larkin to Calhoun, June 20, 1844. MS., State Department.

Larkin had been appointed consul at Monterey, May 1, 1843. Webster to Thompson, May 5. MS., State Department.

California.⁸⁶ But early in the fall, Calhoun made a further attempt to open negotiations for the acquisition of that province in connection with the annexation of Texas. Duff Green, a close friend, was sent to Galveston nominally with the exequatur of consul, but in reality as Calhoun's special agent to join with Ben E. Green, his son, "in conducting the negotiation for the acquisition of Texas, New Mexico, and California."

Green arrived at Galveston shortly before the second of October,⁸⁷ but apparently did not tarry long at his supposed destination as we find him writing Calhoun on the 28th from Mexico City. This communication deserves special mention, not merely because it showed the futility of any immediate attempt to secure a cession of Mexican territory but because the reason given in this particular instance explains very effectually the consistent rejection of similar proposals made by the United States, from that of Poinsett in 1825 to the final offer of Slidell in 1846.

"I am convinced," wrote Green, "that it is *impossible* to obtain the consent of this Government to the cession to the United States of Texas, California or any part of the public domain of Mexico whatever." Then followed a long dissertation on Santa Anna's hostile policy toward the United States, pursued since 1825 for his own selfish interests; a description of the chaotic state into which the government had fallen; and certain remarks upon the constant factional strife with which the land was cursed. "In such a state of things," he continued,

in the midst of a civil conflict where each party is seeking pretences to murder and confiscate the property of their opponents, and where the principle [is maintained] that it is treason to sell any part of the public domain to the United States, it is worse than folly to suppose that either party can alienate any part of Texas or California.⁸⁸

⁸⁶During the year 1844 a California representative, by name of Castañares, was in Mexico pleading for aid for the department, warning the government against American designs, and prophesying the loss of California unless active measures were taken to prevent its falling into the hands of the United States. Bancroft, XXI, 413 *et seq.*

⁸⁷*Facts and Suggestions*, 85. Green says elsewhere that Calhoun told him success in the negotiation would mean a more valuable commerce on the Pacific within a few years than on the Atlantic. Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, III, 174-175.

⁸⁸Memucan Hunt to Calhoun, Oct. 2, 1844. Calhoun *Correspondence*, 975. Mention is here made of Green's consular position.

Farther along in his despatch, Green again laid emphasis upon the fact—which Americans, eager for territory and cognizant of Mexico's need of funds and the easy virtue of some of her officials, were slow to grasp—that any party venturing to sell Texas or California would surely be overthrown, its leaders shot and their property taken over by a rival faction. Out of this difficulty only one way lay open to the United States government; and that, though it promised all the administration could ask, Green refused to specify in writing, reserving his explanation for a personal interview after visiting Texas.⁸⁹

Following Duff Green's departure from Mexico, little concerning California occurs in the correspondence that passed between Wilson Shannon, the American minister who succeeded Thompson, and Calhoun. One important despatch respecting English designs, which will be noticed later, was sent early in January, 1845;⁹⁰ while on the 16th of the same month Shannon wrote that there might be a bare possibility of reopening negotiations with the new government of Paredes and Herrera⁹¹ because of their desperate need of funds.⁹² But the breaking off of diplomatic relations, following the annexation of Texas soon after this, put an effectual stop to all attempts at negotiation for California until Slidell entered the field under Polk's direction.

It should be noted, however, in any discussion of the diplomacy of this period that it was during Tyler's administration that the first hint of Polk's subsequent policy regarding the internal affairs of California is to be found. Larkin, after his appointment as

⁸⁹Duff Green to Calhoun, Oct. 28, 1844. *Ibid.*, 975-980. It is more than probable that Green had reference to the movement he afterwards endeavored to stir up in Texas looking to the revolt of several of the Mexican provinces, including California. Anson Jones, *Republic of Texas*, 412-414; Donelson to Calhoun, Jan. 27, 1845, *Calhoun Correspondence*, 1019-1020.

⁹⁰Green also had something to say in his despatches about England's hold on California.

⁹¹Shannon to Calhoun, Jan. 16, 1845. MS., State Department. Ben Green asserted that the Herrera government was favorably inclined to cede New Mexico and California to the United States, and that he and the United States consul, J. D. Marks, at Matamoras came to Washington to acquaint Tyler with the fact and arrange the negotiation. The appointment of Slidell as minister, according to Green, brought their plans to a standstill (Tylers *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, III, 174-177).

⁹²Santa Anna's overthrow took place about the middle of January.

consul, kept the State Department well informed as to events in the province, especially regarding immigration, the attitude of California officials, and the proceedings of the Hudson's Bay Company. In this he was encouraged by the authorities at Washington; and, still farther, urged to report anything concerning the political condition of California that could "be made subservient to or may effect (*sic*) the interest and well being of our government."⁹³ It was an enlargement upon this plan, that, as we shall see, Polk made use of about one year later.

⁹³Larkin to Secretary of State, April 16, 1844. *Official Correspondence*, II, No. 4; same to same, Aug. 18, *Ibid.*, No. 9. Crallé, Acting Secretary of State, to Larkin, Oct. 25, 1844. Larkin MSS., VI, No. 223.